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ABSTRACT

In Senate Joint Resolution No. 117, Virginia's General Assembly endorsed the process for restructuring education in the middle school grades and requested that the Board of Education determine the appropriateness of designating the middle school as a separate level in the educational structure. The study summarized in this report first considered the literature, research, national trends, and recent emphasis in the Department of Education, all of which support the need for middle school services and practices differing from those in the high school or elementary school grades. The study found that middle school education was delivered in separate schools in 103 of Virginia's 133 school divisions and that at least 62 school divisions will be organized with middle school grades 6-8 by 1992. A clear majority of superintendents surveyed support designation of the middle school as a third educational level. Recommendations are given concerning proper wording for code modifications and for state constitutional amendments providing for compulsory elementary, middle, and high school education. Appendices contain legal texts, number of schools by grade organization for 1989-90, goals for Virginia middle schools, and recommendations from Joyce Epstein's "Phi Delta Kappan" article and the Carnegie Council's "Turning Points." (MLH)

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REPORT OF THE
BOARD OF EDUCATION TO

Study the Appropriateness of Designating the Middle School as the Third Level of Public Education in Virginia

TO THE GOVERNOR AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA

SENATE DOCUMENT NO. 28

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
RICHMOND
1991

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Preface

Senate Joint Resolution No. 117 in the 1990 session requested that the Board of Education determine the appropriateness of designating the middle school as a separate level in the educational structure, focusing on curriculum and program needs, and to make recommendations regarding any statutory requirements which it may deem necessary. The resolution is included as Appendix A.

The study was conducted by Richard E. Levy, Associate Director for Middle Schools and Special Projects, in the Virginia Department of Education.

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Executive Summary

In Senate Joint Resolution No. 117 the General Assembly endorsed the process for restructuring education in the middle school grades, and requested that the Board of Education determine the appropriateness of designating the middle school as a separate level in the educational structure, focusing on curriculum and program needs.

The study first considers the literature and research, national trends, and recent emphasis in the Department of Education, all of which support a need for continuing emphasis on services and practices in middle level education which are different from those in the high school or elementary school grades. The study finds that middle level education is delivered in separate (middle, intermediate or junior high) schools in 103 of Virginia's 133 school divisions (with 89% of the state's total membership), and that at least 62 school divisions (with 62% of the state's total membership), will be organized with middle schools with grades 6-8 by 1992. A survey of division superintendents indicates that a clear majority of those responding support the designation of middle school as a third level of education.

The language "elementary and secondary" appeared first in the 1971 Constitution, and has been repeated since then in the Code. The Attorney General's office has indicated that, because the Code may not differ from the Constitution, amending § 22.1-2. to insert *"middle"* between "elementary and secondary" would not be permissible. An appropriate way of accomplishing the same purpose would be to amend § 22.1-1. of the Code to include *"middle"* or *"elementary, middle and high"* in the definition of "elementary and secondary." A constitutional amendment or revision would be needed to fully designate the middle school as a separate level in the educational structure, along with "elementary and secondary."

Because a constitutional revision or amendment would be necessary to fully designate the middle school as a separate level in the educational structure, and because constitutional revision is a more difficult and time-consuming process than amending and reenacting the Code, it is recommended that the designation of middle schools proceed in two stages.

Recommendations

In the first stage, as an interim measure, the existing language of the Code of Virginia should be modified by amending § 22.1-1., redefining "elementary and secondary schools" to include *"elementary, middle and high schools"*. The definition should not assign specific grade levels for elementary, middle, or high schools, and should make clear that there is not a requirement that school divisions maintain separate middle schools. *"Middle school"* or *"middle"* should also be inserted as appropriate in other code sections. Appendix B includes the suggested amendments.

In the second stage, at such time as a general revision or other significant amendments are made to the Constitution of Virginia, Article VIII, § 1. should be amended to provide for "a system of free public elementary, *middle* and ~~secondary~~ *high* schools." Likewise, Article VIII, § 3. should be amended to provide for "compulsory elementary, *middle* and ~~secondary~~ *high school* education." Revision of the Code of Virginia should follow.

Chapter I: Introduction and Background

1. Increase in the number of middle schools

The growth in the number of the middle schools (usually with grades 6, 7 and 8) in Virginia has paralleled, and in many cases has out-paced the growth of middle school education in the United States. From 1970 to 1987, the number of middle schools with grades 6-8 increased nationally from 1662 to 4329, while the number of junior high schools with grades 7-9 decreased from 4711 to 2191. A similar increase has taken place in Virginia, with the number of schools with grades 6-8 increasing from 30 in 1973-74 to 141 in 1989-90, and projected to increase to approximately 160 in 1992-93. During the same period, the number of junior high schools with grades 7-9 have decreased from 50 in 1973-74 to 28 in 1989-90, and will decrease further to approximately 15 by 1992-93.

While other organizational patterns remain, it is clear that the predominant organizational arrangement in schools for early adolescents is the middle school which incorporates grades 6-8. The most recent listing of numbers of schools by grade, and the list from 1973-74 are included as Appendix C.

As school divisions continue their transition to an organizational structure which has middle schools with grades 6-8, it is expected that 62 school divisions (with 61% of Virginia's total public school membership) will be so organized by 1992-93.

By 1992-93, only 25 school divisions (with less than 5% of the total state membership) will retain the old two-level organizational pattern of elementary schools with grades K-7, and high schools with grades 8-12. Forty-one other school divisions (with 28% of the total state enrollment) will have some schools which are also called middle, intermediate, or junior high schools, but are have grades other than 6-8. And 5 school divisions (with 5% of the total state enrollment) have mixtures of school organizations with no consistent pattern.

2. Curriculum, instruction, and student services for the middle school grades

With the increase in the number of middle schools, both in Virginia and nationally, there has been a parallel growth in the understanding that early adolescent students have educational needs which are not the same as those of older or younger students. Authorities agree that early adolescent students are best served by schools which take into account their particular developmental situation in planning curriculum, instruction, and student services. Early adolescents are in a period of rapid transition, physically, mentally, socially and emotionally. They need to be taught differently than students in the earlier grades, and to be in a school setting which allows them to develop academic skills, responsibility and a sense of their own potential to become responsible, contributing members of society. At the same time, we know that early adolescent students are not well served by schools which demand too much self-direction or autonomy, or fail to provide for their need to be nurtured, encouraged and given direction.

As school divisions make the transition from other organizational patterns to middle schools, they typically implement the educational practices which are recommended for early adolescent students, including: interdisciplinary teaming of teachers; a regular program of advising; an emphasis on interdisciplinary content and skills; and a focus on meeting students' social and emotional needs in order to make academic and practical learning more effective.

Interdisciplinary teaming of teachers usually involves a team of two to five teachers with a group of "their own" students for the larger part of a school day. The teachers plan together and coordinate instruction. The students as well as the teachers have a focus for belonging and group identity within the larger school. Teams often focus on meeting the social and emotional needs of students as well as the academic needs. Teachers who teach in teamed situations often report higher professional satisfaction than teachers who work in the relative isolation of a self-contained or departmental organization.

Regular programs of *advising*, in which teachers and other adults in the school work regularly and informally with small groups of students as advisors and adult friends, have been found to be very effective in helping students to feel positive about being in school, and in allowing them to develop appropriate social behaviors. Advisory activities often set a positive, relaxed and friendly tone for the day for students who have come to school from stress or turmoil at home or in their neighborhoods.

Interdisciplinary teams and individual teachers in the middle school grades are encouraged to help their students understand that much of the *content and many of the skills they learn are important across several of the traditional academic disciplines.* Reading, writing, and mathematics skills are important everywhere, and are learned best when they are applied in learning situations throughout a student's instructional day. Much of the content which is traditionally thought of as social studies, for instance, spills over into literature, science, technology, and the arts. And real-world situations which students will encounter daily in their young lives and later as adults will rarely classify themselves as science or home economics to the exclusion of all other knowledge.

Students who are unhappy or who have low self-esteem rarely are successful in school. Early adolescents are often, because of the other changes which are occurring in their bodies and their minds, less secure or stable than older or younger students. The difficult home and neighborhood situations which many students come from can compound their school-related problems. Recognizing these needs, many middle schools have implemented programs for recognizing, motivating, and encouraging their students. Through special activities such as groups which focus on students' interests, through frequent recognition of achievement in all areas of school life, through advising, and through an approach to instruction that is focused on students' individual needs and learning styles, many middle schools are able to *foster the positive attitudes toward school and self* which must precede success and achievement. Included as Appendix D is an abstract of the publication Framework for Education in the Middle School Grades in Virginia, which describes more completely the educational program which should be provided in schools for early adolescents.

3. Incomplete implementation of appropriate educational practices

Many school divisions have made or are making the transition to middle schools, and have implemented or plan to implement many of the practices described above. Others, while unable because of existing buildings or difficult geography to establish separate middle schools, have done what they can within existing structures to meet the educational needs of their early adolescent students by implementing many of these practices. Still others have done little to put into place ways of teaching or working with early adolescents that are different from and more appropriate than the ways they work with older or younger students.

Appropriate practices for middle school education have not yet come close to full implementation, and even in most school divisions which have made the transition to middle schools the implementation of appropriate practices is largely incomplete. This has been convincingly documented on the national scale by researchers from the Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools at The Johns Hopkins University. An abstract of these research findings is included as Appendix E. In order for all of Virginia's early adolescent students to receive the benefits of the best education that can be provided there needs to be a continuing emphasis on appropriate educational practices in the middle school grades.

4. Restructuring education in the middle school grades in Virginia

The Board of Education adopted in 1988 a process for restructuring education in the middle school grades. In this process, each school with grades 6, 7 or 8 engages in a process of studying and implementing effective educational practices and organizational structures for early adolescents. To assist in the restructuring process, twenty-nine Vanguard Middle Schools were selected. The first group of 147 schools began the restructuring process in July, 1990.

Chapter II: The Study

1. Survey of Virginia school division superintendents

The division superintendents from Virginia's 133 school divisions were asked in July, 1990 to state an opinion as to the advisability of designating middle school as a statutorily defined third level of public education in Virginia. Responses were received from fifty-eight school divisions:

49 school divisions (total membership 516,265*; 52.4% of total state membership) favor middle school as a third level. Most of those superintendents who responded indicated that their primary reason for favoring middle school as a third level would be the emphasis on appropriate educational programming. Some indicated that administrative reporting of data to the Department of Education should be consistent with the recommended organization of schools.

9 school divisions (total membership 24,061; 2.4% of total state membership) oppose middle school as a third level. Of these school divisions, six have the traditional K-7, 8-12 pattern of grade organization; two have junior high schools which include grades 7-9, and one has middle schools with grades 6, 7 and 8. Several of those superintendents who opposed the third level expressed concern that their school divisions might be required to open separate middle schools.

75 school divisions (total membership 444,705; 45.1% of total state membership) did not respond to the survey.

Finding: The superintendents of school divisions which have more than 52% of Virginia's public school students recommend that the middle school be the third level of public education in Virginia.

2. Study of school organization patterns in Virginia school divisions

A study was made of school organization patterns in Virginia. The study took into account the planned reorganization of grade patterns in several school divisions which will take place by the 1992-93 school year. A summary table of the data is included as Appendix F. The survey revealed the following:

A. School divisions organized with elementary and high schools, but with no middle, junior high, or elementary schools.

24 school divisions (total membership 47,972; 4.9% of total state membership) are organized with K-7 elementary schools and 8-12 high schools, or with K-12 combined schools.

1 school division (total membership 941; 0.1% of total state membership) is organized with a K-6 elementary school and a 7-12 high school.

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*This and all subsequent membership figures are taken from the fall (as of September 30) data for the 1989-90 school year. Later figures were not available when the study was made. No significant difference in numbers of pupils or percentages is expected between the 1989-90 figures and those for 1990-91.

B. School divisions organized with elementary and high schools, and with schools which are called middle, intermediate, or junior high schools.

62 school divisions (total membership 606,199; 61.5% of total state membership) have middle schools with grades 6-8.

8 school divisions (total membership 16,423; 1.7% of total state membership) have middle or intermediate schools with grades 4-7, 5-7 or 6-7.

3 school divisions (total membership 11,502; 1.2% of total state membership) have middle schools with grade spans 3-8 or 5-8.

16 school divisions (total membership 174,497; 17.7% of total state membership) have intermediate schools with a grade span of 7-8. This group includes Fairfax County (total membership 126,790; 12.9% of total state membership) which is piloting 3 middle schools with grades 6-8 in one of its regions, and which is moving toward the middle school instructional model.

8 school divisions (total membership 51,926, 5.27% of total state membership) have middle or junior high schools with grades 6-9 or 7-9.

6 school divisions (total membership 23,687; 2.4% of total state membership) have middle or junior high schools with grade 8 or with grades 8-9.

C. School divisions with mixed organizational patterns.

5 school divisions (total membership 51,844, 5.3% of total state membership) have a mixed grade arrangement for their schools.

Finding: 103 school divisions in Virginia (total membership 884,234; 89.8% of total state membership) have some form of middle level education. More than two thirds of these have, or will have by the 1992-93 school year, middle schools which have grades 6-8.

3. Survey of other states

All of the chief state school officers were asked to furnish information about the statutory provisions for levels of public education in their states, and to state a professional opinion as to the advisability of designating middle school as a third level of public education. Thirty responses were received:

Six state superintendents favor three levels; two oppose a third level; and 22 stated no clear position on the question.

Six states reported having three statutory levels of education:
- Florida (middle is 6-8)
- Georgia (middle is 6-8)
- Iowa (junior high is 7-8)
- Kentucky (middle will be 5-8, under the 1990 reform act)
- West Virginia (middle is 5-8)
- Wyoming (middle is 6/7-8/9)

The remaining states reported two levels of education: elementary and secondary. Included grade levels varied. Occasionally there were provisions for grades 6 and 7 to be included in either the elementary or secondary grades. The most common arrangement reported was grades K-8 as elementary, and 9-12 as secondary. Some states include middle within the elementary or secondary category.

Finding: Six states have established the middle school as a third statutory level of education. Most have not.

4. Survey of associations

A survey was made to determine whether any state or national associations had taken a position on the question of middle schools as the third statutory level of public education:

The Virginia Education Association's Board of Directors, at its August 1990 meeting, endorsed the concept of establishing the middle school as a separate level in the educational structure.

The Virginia PTA adopted at its 1989 convention a resolution "that the Virginia PTA urge the General Assembly to designate middle grade schools as a third distinct level of education . . ."

The Virginia Middle School Association endorses the middle school as a third level of public education in Virginia.

The Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals, the Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals, and the Virginia School Boards Association did not respond to the survey.

The National Middle School Association supports separate recognition of middle school education.

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development supports the development of schools appropriate for youth at the middle grade level.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals, while it did not respond to the survey, has for the past ten years supported and encouraged the development of strong middle level schools for early adolescents.

The National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE), which produces the materials used by regional and state-level school accreditation organizations, has for many years published a separate Evaluative Criteria for Middle Schools. The 1990 edition of the Evaluative Criteria will be used in Virginia and throughout the region of by members of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Other regional accrediting agencies will also adopt the revised evaluative criteria.

Finding: There is substantial support from respected educational organizations for the designation of middle school as the third level of public education.

5. Survey of the literature

The professional literature in education since 1970 has overwhelmingly favored the development of middle school education which is appropriate to the specific developmental and educational needs of early adolescents. The focus of much of this literature has been on appropriate practices in school organization, instruction, delivery of services, and curriculum development for the age group. The underlying assumption of much of the literature is that early adolescents are best served in separate middle schools, or through the implementation of appropriate practices in the middle grades of existing schools.

Except for recommendations from the National Middle School Association concerning the preparation and licensing of teachers to work at the middle school level, and for general emphasis on the development of good schools for early adolescents, little attention has been given until quite recently to state-level policy initiatives for the middle school grades. That emphasis came in Turning Points, (1989) the report of the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. An abstract of Turning Points is included as Appendix G.

Finding: While the literature and research has been focused heavily on the middle school as the best organizational arrangement for meeting the intellectual and developmental needs of early adolescents, there has been little or no emphasis except from the Carnegie Corporation and as described below on states' recognition of middle school as a third level of education.

6. State policy initiatives

State level policy initiatives in Florida and Georgia in the mid-1980's resulted both in the designation of the middle school grades as a separate level in the educational structure and in tangible incentives for school districts to implement middle school practices.

In California, the 1987 publication of a state report titled Caught in the Middle has been followed by a program of voluntary school restructuring, with support from the private sector. Similar restructuring activities with state support have begun in New York and Maryland.

In Virginia, Model Middle Schools were selected in 1987, after the earlier selection of a Model High School and a Model Elementary School. The process of restructuring of education in the middle school grades began in 1988, as the result of recommendations made by Governor Gerald Baliles' Commission on Excellence in Education. In the restructuring process each school with grade 6, 7 or 8 engages in a process of school improvement which should result in increased achievement for pupils and more appropriate curriculum, instruction, and delivery of services. The restructuring process was endorsed in the 1990 session of the General Assembly in Senate Joint Resolution No. 117.

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development's report Turning Points (1989) has called for state level policy initiatives in all states, as well as action at the federal and local levels and in the private sector to insure that early adolescents' education is improved. To this end, the Carnegie Corporation of New York has funded grants to 27 states for implementing its recommendations. Virginia applied for and received one of those grants, and will be using the funding for curriculum development and to support an advisory committee.

Finding: There will be an increase in the number of states which are giving attention to

the specific educational needs of early adolescents at the state policy level. Virginia has been among the leaders in this area.

7. The middle school grades within the Virginia Department of Education

The traditional organization and program emphasis of the Department of Education has been that grades K-7 are the elementary school grades, while grades 8-12 are the high school grades. The middle school grades, however, have been defined as grades 6-8, and for many purposes are recognized separately. For other purposes, the middle school grades have been considered to be included in the secondary grades, and for yet other purposes they are not recognized.

The Certification Regulations for Teachers, and most of the approved college and university programs for preparation of new teachers provide for separate endorsement of teachers for the middle grades. This endorsement applies to teachers who work with all but the most specialized subject matter for grades 4-8. Separate middle school endorsements are also available for supervisors, and are required for principals and counselors.

The Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia, which are adopted biennially as regulations of the State Board of Education, provide for the accreditation of middle schools with grades 6-8 as separate entities from elementary (K-5) or secondary (9-12) schools. Schools with grade patterns which differ from these are assigned to the category most similar to their organization. Specific standards exist for staffing, educational program, and the delivery of services in middle schools. Middle schools which have principals or counselors who do not have the separate middle school endorsement or which have teachers who are not properly endorsed are considered deficient, and may fail to gain state accreditation.

Program emphasis since 1978 has been on effective middle schools along with effective elementary and high schools. This emphasis is reflected in various publications of the Department of Education, including Guidelines for Middle School Education in Virginia (1978), About the Middle School Years (1982), Framework for Education in the Middle School Grades in Virginia (1990), and Educational Implications for Gifted Students in the Middle School Grades (1990).

Middle school principals and assistant principals have been the target population for the Department of Education's annual Secondary Principals' Conference, which in 1990 was re-named the Middle and High School Principals' Conference.

Administrative reporting of financial and staffing data from school divisions to the Department of Education in the Annual School Report continues to rely on the categorization of instructional expenditures as "elementary" (grades K-7) or "secondary" (grades 8-12). This is consistent with an assumption that the language of the Code of Virginia (§ 22.1-2) which calls for "elementary and secondary schools" requires that data be reported in those two categories. It is consistent with the internal organizational patterns of only 38 school divisions, which enroll only 9.1% of the state's total membership.

State curriculum documents, particularly the Standards of Learning Objectives, contain separate learning objectives for the various subjects at each grade level, without reference to the level of schooling. For example, there are separate sets of learning objectives for science in grades 5, 6, 7 and 8.

There were from prior to 1980 until the 1990 reorganization two positions in the Virginia Department of Education which have been focused on implementing effective middle school programs. The Supervisor of Middle School Guidance has worked in parallel with colleagues responsible for elementary school guidance and for high school guidance programs. The Associate Director for Middle Schools and Special Projects has worked to implement appropriate educational programming in middle and junior high schools. The target population for both positions has been early adolescents, ages 11-14, in grades 6-8.

The reorganization of the Department of Education will shift the responsibility for services provided by these positions to other positions. Divisions of Early Childhood, Pre-adolescent, and Adolescent Student Services will replace an internal organization which has been divided between General (Elementary and Secondary), Vocational and Special Education. The needs of early adolescent youth who are served by middle, intermediate and junior high schools will be a major focus of the Division of Pre-adolescent Student Services.

Finding: While administrative arrangements within the Department of Education have recognized the existence of and need for middle schools, there has been internal inconsistency in the way that the Department of Education is organized for the delivery of services.

8. Constitution and Code

Article VIII, § 1. of the Constitution of Virginia (1971) states that "The General Assembly shall provide for a system of free public elementary and sec-ondary schools for all children of school age throughout the commonwealth. . ." Article VIII, § 3. states that "The General Assembly shall provide for the compulsory elementary and secondary education of every eligible child . . ."

The words "elementary and secondary" did not appear in the Constitution of Virginia before 1971. Prior to that revision, Article IX, §129. of the earlier Constitution required that "The General Assembly shall establish and maintain an efficient system of free public schools."

A review of the House Debates on the 1970 Constitutional Revision, pp. 268-272, indicates that the words "elementary and secondary" were placed in the revised constitution in order to establish the outer limits of free public schooling, *i.e.* to exclude kindergarten and community college. There was no apparent intent in the debates that the two levels (elementary and secondary) should otherwise describe the levels of free public schools or compulsory education.

References in the Code of Virginia (§ 22.1-2. and elsewhere) repeat the terminology of the 1971 Constitution. "There shall be a system of free public elementary and secondary schools established and maintained as provided in this title and administered by the Board of Education, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, division superintendents and school boards."

"Elementary" is further defined by an amendment in § 22.1-1. of the Code to include "kindergarten."

Legal opinion has been obtained that the language of the Code may not differ from the language of the Constitution, but that the language of the Code may be further defined to include middle schools and/or middle school education within the larger category of elementary and/or secondary schools.

Findings:

1. There is recent precedent for amending or revising the Constitution of Virginia to include specific levels of public education or public schools.

2. The Code of Virginia may not differ from the provisions of the Constitution, but the Code may and frequently does further define the language of the Constitution.

Chapter III: Recommendations

For the following reasons, it is appropriate that middle schools be designated as a separate level of public education in the educational structure of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

1. It has been clearly established that early adolescent students have educational and developmental needs which are best served by educational programs and services which are different from those for older or younger students. To provide those educational programs and services most effectively, many school systems have implemented middle school programs in separate middle schools or in other existing schools.

2. There has been a significant increase since 1970, when the Constitution of Virginia was last revised, in the number of school divisions in Virginia and in the nation which have middle schools as a third distinct level of their educational structure. One hundred three school divisions in Virginia (total membership 884,234; 89.8% of total state membership) have some form of middle level education. More than two thirds of these have, or will have by the 1992-93 school year, middle schools which have grades 6-8. The superintendents of school divisions which have more than 52% of Virginia's public school students have recommend that the middle school be the third level of public education in Virginia.

3. While many school divisions have made the transition to middle school education, some have not. Most school divisions have not fully implemented educational programs and services which are appropriate for early adolescents. There is a continuing need for emphasis on appropriate educational programs and services for early adolescents which will help them to be successful in school and later in the workplace, and to develop self-esteem and the life skills which will be necessary in the 21st century.

4. Virginia has been among the leading states in emphasizing appropriate education at the middle school level. To date only six states have designated middle school as a third level of education. It is probable that more states will move in this direction as a result of emerging national interest in the age group.

5. There is substantial support from respected educational organizations for the designation of middle school as the third level of public education.

6. Separate administrative recognition of middle schools as a level in the educational structure has been a policy of the Board of Education and a practice within the Department of Education for more than ten years.

7. There is recent precedent for amending or revising the Constitution of Virginia to include specific levels of public education or public schools. While the Code of Virginia may not differ from the provisions of the Constitution, the Code may and frequently does further define the language of the Constitution.

Because a constitutional revision or amendment would be necessary to fully designate the middle school as a separate level in the educational structure, and because amending or revising the Constitution is a more difficult and time-consuming process than amending and reenacting the Code, it is recommended that the designation of middle schools proceed in two stages.

In the first stage, as an interim measure, the existing language of the Code of Virginia should be modified by amending § 22.1-1., redefining "elementary and secondary schools" to include *middle schools*. No further definition of elementary, middle, or high schools by specific grade level should be enacted. *"Middle school"* or *"middle"* should also be inserted as appropriate in other code sections.

The language of these amendments should make it clear that there is no requirement that school divisions maintain separate middle schools, and that middle school programs may be offered in schools which also house elementary or high school grades. Suggested amendments are included as Appendix B.

In the second stage, at such time as a general revision or other amendments are made to the Constitution of Virginia, Article VIII, § 1. should be amended in to provide for "a system of free public elementary, *middle* and ~~secondary~~ *high* schools." Likewise, Article VIII § 3. should be amended to provide for compulsory "elementary, *middle* and ~~secondary~~ *high school* education."

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 117

Requesting Board of Education to study the appropriateness of designating the middle school as the third level of public education in Virginia

Agreed to by the Senate, March 9, 1990
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 9, 1990

WHEREAS, education in the middle school grades (6-8) is a critical foundation for success in high school and post-secondary education and for later successful participation in the benefits of citizenship and employment: and

WHEREAS the Governor's Commission on Excellence in Education in 1986 recommended that the program in the middle school grades be restructured to increase student achievement, problem solving skills, and positive attitudes toward self and others; and

WHEREAS, many recent reports and studies including the report of the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, have emphasized the importance of appropriate educational practices and services for students in the middle school grades; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Education and the Department of Education have begun the process of restructuring education in the middle school grades, which should result before the year 2000 in a significant increase in the number of schools which are successfully meeting the unique educational needs of early adolescents; and

WHEREAS, there has been a great interest in schools and school divisions across the Commonwealth in providing an appropriate education for early adolescents, based on the unique needs of this age group; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly endorses the process for restructuring education in the middle school grades, and supports the Board of Education and the Department of Education in the effort to increase the success and achievement of all students in the middle school grades; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Board of Education is requested to determine the appropriateness of designating the middle school as a separate level in the educational structure, focusing on curriculum and program needs, and to make recommendations regarding any statutory requirements which it may deem necessary.

The Board of Education shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly prior to the 1991 Session as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for processing legislative documents.

Proposed amendments to the Code of Virginia to implement the recommendation that middle schools be designated a separate level in the educational structure.

§ 22.1-1. Definitions.—As used in this title unless the context requires otherwise or it is otherwise specifically provided:

1. "Board or "State Board" means the Board of Education.
2. "Division superintendent" means the division superintendent of schools of a school division.
3. "Elementary" includes kindergarten.
4. "Person of school age" means a person who will have reached his fifth birthday on or before September 30 of the school year and who has not reached twenty years of age on or before August first of the school year.
5. "School board" means the school board of a school division.
6. *"Elementary and secondary schools" includes elementary, middle and high schools.*
7. *"Middle school" means both separate schools for early adolescents, and the middle school grades which might be housed in elementary or high schools.*

§ 22.1-19. Accreditation of elementary, *middle* and ~~secondary~~ *high* schools; nursery schools.—The Board shall provide for the accreditation of public elementary, *middle* and ~~secondary~~ *high* schools in accordance with standards prescribed by it. The Board may provide for the accreditation of private elementary, *middle* and ~~secondary~~ *high* schools in accordance with standards prescribed by it, taking reasonably into account the special circumstances and factors affecting such private schools. The Board in its discretion may recommend provisions for standards for private nursery schools. Any such accreditation shall be at the request of the private school only.

***§ 22.1-200.1. Subjects taught in middle school grades.**—In the middle school grades of every public school the following subjects shall be taught in a curriculum appropriate to the developmental needs of early adolescent students: art, music, health, physical education, family life education, language arts, science (laboratory), mathematics, social studies (to include world geography, civil government, history of the United States and history of Virginia), vocational education and foreign language.*

§ 22.1-201. Study of documents of Virginia history and United States Constitution.—The Declaration of American Independence, the general principles of the Constitution of the United States, the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom, and the Virginia Declaration of Rights shall be thoroughly explained and taught by teachers to pupils in ~~both~~ public elementary, *middle* and ~~secondary~~ *high* schools. Emphasis shall be given to the citizenship responsibilities inherent in the rights included in these documents. Written examinations as to each of such documents shall be given.

§ 22.1-207. Physical and health education. — Physical and health education shall be emphasized throughout the public school curriculum by lessons, drills and physical exercises, and all pupils in the public elementary, *middle* and ~~secondary~~ *high* schools shall receive as part of the educational program such health instruction and physical training as shall be prescribed by the Board of Education and approved by the State Board of Health.

22.1-208.1. Reading to learn; Virginia Reading to Learn Project established.—A. In the ~~secondary~~ *middle and high* schools of every school division, reading to learn shall be emphasized as an integral part of instruction in every subject. In order to better equip ~~secondary~~ *middle and high school* teachers to provide this emphasis, there is hereby established the Virginia Reading to Learn Project.

B. The Project shall consist initially of six regional sites established at state universities which will include, but not be limited to, summer institutes for secondary teachers and program planning and development support in cooperation with local school divisions.

C. The initial regional university sites will be Old Dominion University/Norfolk State University, the University of Virginia, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, George Mason University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and James Madison University.

D. The Virginia Department of Education will distribute and monitor the funds necessary to implement the Project from available appropriations according to guidelines established by the Department.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS BY GRADE ORGANIZATION FOR THE 1989-90 SCHOOL YEAR

GRADE ORGANIZATION	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	GRADE ORGANIZATION	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS
UG - UG	106*	03 - 06	11
PK - 01	1	03 - 07	3
PK - 02	1	03 - 08	1
PK - 04	1	04 - 05	2
PK - 05	48	04 - 06	14
PK - 07	7	04 - 07	13
K - 01	7	04 - 08	1
K - 02	33	05 - 05	1
K - 03	45	05 - 06	9
K - 04	56	05 - 07	16
K - 05	443	05 - 08	7
K - 06	287	05 - 09	1
K - 07	98	06 - 07	11
K - 08	2	06 - 08	141
K - 09	3	06 - 09	4
K - 12	5	06 - 12	7
01 - 03	1	07 - 08	49
01 - 04	1	07 - 09	28
01 - 05	1	07 - 11	1
01 - 06	1	07 - 12	17
01 - 07	2	08 - 08	2
02 - 03	2	08 - 09	9
02 - 04	1	08 - 12	62
02 - 05	5	09 - 10	1
02 - 06	2	09 - 12	176
03 - 04	2	10 - 12	23
03 - 05	15		1,786

*Includes the Regional Special Education Centers

Number of Schools by Grade Organization, 1973-74

Grade Organization	Number of Schools
PK-02	1
PK-03	1
PK-04	1
PK-05	6
PK-06	11
K-K	3
K-01	5
K-02	24
K-03	71
K-04	48
K-05	84
K-06	345
K-07	199
K-08	6
K-09	6
K-12	11
01-01	2
01-02	5
01-03	25
01-04	19
01-05	75
01-06	66
01-07	61
01-08	2
01-12	1
02-03	1
02-05	6
02-06	1
02-07	1
03-04	4
03-05	6
03-06	12
03-07	7
04-04	1
04-05	1
04-06	29
04-07	46
04-08	1
04-10	1
05-05	2
05-06	13
05-07	27
05-08	2
05-09	1
06-06	5
06-07	16
06-08	30
06-09	7
06-12	6
07-07	3
07-08	55
07-09	50
07-10	2
07-12	16
08-08	2
08-09	35
08-10	2
08-11	2
08-12	101
09-10	3
09-11	1
09-12	96
10-12	65
11-12	4
TOTAL	1,741

Above list does not include annexes, nor does it include schools with ungraded organizations such as special education schools and vocational schools.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Framework for Education in the Middle School Grades in Virginia (1990)

This publication of the Virginia Department of Education describes desirable educational practices for early adolescents. It contains recommendations which should be implemented to insure that early adolescents receive the best education that can be provided. Copies of Framework for Education in the Middle School Grades in Virginia may be obtained from the Virginia Department of Education.

- The education of early adolescents should be appropriate to their intellectual, physical, emotional and social needs.

- The middle school grades are 6-8. The recommended educational setting for students in these grades is a clearly defined middle school which is different from a high or an elementary school.

- Middle schools should contribute positively to the culture, society, and community in which they exist, involving parents and community in the educational process. Middle schools should actively seek involvement in cooperative partnerships with local business and/or industries.

- There should be a positive climate in the middle school, based on the understanding that each student should be a successful learner, and that each person in the school is worthy of recognition and respect.

- The organization of the school and the orientation of the faculty should reflect a broad concern for the development of the whole child. Interdisciplinary teaming is recommended as the most appropriate organizational plan for middle schools. Instruction for most children in the middle school grades should be from teachers who are specialists in one or more areas.

- Middle school students should acquire and use knowledge productively, and should be helped to understand that much knowledge and many skills are interdisciplinary.

- All students in the middle school grades should pursue an expanded common core curriculum which emphasizes academic and practical achievement, and appropriate social, physical and emotional growth.

- All students in the middle school grades should choose areas of academics, fine arts or vocational studies for exploration, based on their own interests and abilities. They should be involved in activities which enable them to experience success and social growth, and to be of service to others.

- Instruction in the middle school grades should be appropriate to the needs and characteristics of early adolescents.

- Grouping in the middle school grades may be homogeneous for reading and mathematics, and for specific programs of instruction for gifted and non-mainstreamed special education. Grouping for instruction in all other areas of the curriculum should be heterogeneous. Middle school students should not be placed in "tracks."

- A major task of the middle school should be remedial instruction for students who score in the bottom quartile of the Virginia State Assessment Program Tests and for those who do not pass the state's Literacy Passport Tests.

- Scheduling in the middle school grades should allow for flexibility in the delivery of instruction.

- Special education in the middle school grades must be in accordance with federal and state regulations, and with the program recommendations of the Virginia Department of Education.

- Gifted education in the middle school grades must be conducted according to state regulations and the local school division's plan for educating gifted students, as approved by the Virginia Department of Education.

- Each student in the middle school grades should be known well and advised by at least one adult who works in that school. The guidance and counseling programs in the middle school should be as described in current publications of the Virginia Department of Education.

- The middle school years should be a time of smooth transition from the elementary school to the high school. Students in the middle school grades should move through a structure that takes them from the self-contained elementary classroom to the six-or-seven period day which is typically the high school experience.

- Middle school students and their teachers should learn to understand computers and should use them in the daily activities of teaching and learning. Middle school students and their teachers should develop a basic understanding of technology.

- Middle school students and their parents must be helped to look ahead and to prepare for the future. Career education should begin in the middle school grades and be infused into the middle school curriculum.

- Students must be healthy in order to be successful learners. The school should seek to ensure that all students have access to needed health services. The school should be a health-promoting environment.

- Students who are at risk must receive extra help in the middle school grades to improve their chance to succeed, to complete school, and to make a successful transition from school to work.

Epstein, Joyce L. *et. al.*, "Education in the Middle Grades: a National Survey of Practices and Trends," *Phi Delta Kappan*, February, 1990.

This special section of a respected educational journal contains six articles written by the researchers at the Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools at The Johns Hopkins University. The articles summarize the results of a 1988 study of practices and trends in middle school education. Data was collected from the principals of schools with a seventh grade. These included many types of schools, including middle, junior high, elementary, and high schools. Major findings are summarized below. The entire article is available as a reprint from the Center.

1. Most schools that contain grade 7 have not yet implemented programs based on recommended practices for the middle grades. Recommended practices (e.g. interdisciplinary teacher teams with common planning time, interdisciplinary core curriculum, flexible scheduling, exploratory courses, advising, parent involvement) are more likely to have been implemented in middle schools than in other types of schools which have a seventh grade.

2. Tracking, which helps only a small percentage of students to learn and is harmful to many more, is widely used in the middle school grades. Two thirds of the schools surveyed use some form of tracking (also called between-class ability grouping). The number of students who experience at least some tracking increases from about 70% of fifth-graders to 80% of sixth-graders and 85% of seventh- and eighth-graders.

3. Curriculum offerings do not vary greatly between schools, except that smaller schools typically have fewer elective and exploratory offerings.

4. "Drill and practice" and memorization of facts are more commonly used instructional activities than writing, discussion and investigation. Writing, discussion and investigation are more likely to occur in urban and suburban schools than in small-town and rural schools.

5. In staffing and organization, most middle grade schools are more subject-centered than student centered. More teachers in these schools are subject area specialists than elementary-trained classroom teachers. School organization tends to be departmentalized. While some benefit can come from a subject-centered approach in grade 8 and 9, it is less appropriate in grades 5, 6 and 7. In all cases, the subject-centered approach should be tempered by arrangements which provide for needed social and emotional growth.

Summary of School Divisions' Fall 1989 membership and internal grade organization

No. of School Divisions	School Division's Organizational Plan	No. Pupils PK thru 12	Pct. of total PK thru 12	No. Pupils 6 thru 8	Pct of total 6 thru 8
24	2 levels: K-7, 8-12	47972	4.87%	11428	5.31%
1	2 levels: K-6,8-12	941	0.10%	219	0.10%
8	3 levels: middle is 4-7,5-7, or 6-7;	16423	1.67%	3818	1.77%
3	3 levels: middle is 3-8 or 5-8	11502	1.17%	2524	1.17%
*62	3 levels: middle is 6-8*	606199	61.54%	130929	60.85%
**16	3 levels: middle is 7-8	174497	17.71%	37439	17.40%
8	3 levels: middle is 6-9 or 7-9	51926	5.27%	11309	5.26%
6	3 levels: middle is 8 or 8-9	23687	2.40%	5363	2.49%
5	no consistent pattern	51884	5.27%	12146	5.64%
		985031			

*includes five school divisions in transition to the 6-8 grade organization and 7 school divisions predominantly in 6-8 organization

** includes Fairfax County (total enrollment 126,790 total and 26,646 in grades 6-8) which has three 6-8 schools and is exploring the implementation of middle schools

Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century. Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1989.

The report of the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development's Task Force on the Education of Young Adolescents is the most significant document issued to date on the topic of middle school education. Full copies may be obtained from the Council, 11 Dupont Circle N.W., Washington D.C. 20036. The Task Force recommends that middle grade schools:

• *Create small communities for learning* where stable, close, mutually respectful relationships with adults and peers are considered fundamental for intellectual development and personal growth. The key elements of these communities are schools-within-schools or houses, students and teachers grouped together as teams; and small group advisories that ensure that every student is known well by at least one adult.

• *Teach a core academic program* that results in students who are literate, including in the sciences, and who know how to think critically, lead a healthy life, behave ethically, and assume the responsibilities of citizenship in a pluralistic society. Youth service to promote values for citizenship is an essential part of the core academic program.

• *Ensure success for all students* through elimination of tracking by achievement level and promotion of cooperative learning, flexibility in arranging instructional time, and adequate resources (time, space, equipment and materials) for teachers.

• *Empower teachers and administrators to make decisions about the experiences of middle grade students* through creative control by teachers over the instructional program linked to greater responsibilities for students' performance, governance committees that assist the principal in designing and coordinating school-wide programs, and autonomy and leadership within sub-schools or houses to create environments tailored to enhance the intellectual and emotional development of all youth.

• *Staff middle grade schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents* and who have been specially prepared for assignment to the middle grades.

• *Improve academic performance through fostering the health and fitness* of young adolescents, by providing a health coordinator in every middle grade school, access to health care and counseling services, and a health-promoting school environment.

• *Reengage families in the education of young adolescents* by giving families meaningful roles in school governance, communicating with families about the school program and student's progress, and offering families opportunities to support the learning process at home and at the school.

• *Connect schools with communities,* which together share responsibility for each middle grade student's success, through identifying service opportunities in the community, establishing partnerships and collaborations to ensure students' access to health and social services, and using community resources to enrich the instructional program and opportunities for constructive after-school activities.